UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

In Recital

JOSEPH C. LAI

assisted by

SYLVIA SHADICK-TAYLOR
JUDY-LYNN SAWCHUK
AND FRIENDS

Sunday, June 7, 1987 at 3 p.m.

'Orientique' for piano and percussion (1986).....Joseph Lai
(xylophone, temple blocks, gong, timpano)
Sylvia Shadick-Taylor, piano
Scott Martin, Graeme Peppink, Joseph Lai, percussion
Ken Cunningham, contemporary ballet solo

Piece for Unaccompanied (Clarinet) Flute (1986).....Marco Burak
Sonya Schrum, flute

'Solitude' for Solo Clarinet (1986).....Joseph Lai

Piano Piece for Left Hand (1987).....Marco Burak
Allegro, Grave, Presto, Andantino

INTERMISSION

Concerto in D for Piano (Left Hand) and
Orchestra (1929-31).....Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)
Sylvia Shadick-Taylor, accompanist

Three Romances (Homage to Sergei Rachmaninov) (1987).....Joseph Lai
(First versions)
1) Vocalise: Tranquillo, Lentamente e molto cantabile (for soprano and piano)
3) Vocalise/Aria: Violentemente, Lente lugubre (for soprano and left-hand piano)
2) 'Amortissement D'affection': Mesto, melancholic (for solo piano)
Judy-Lynn Sawchuk, soprano
Joseph C. Lai, piano

* -in memory of John Lai- *

Sponsored by: Oliver Music Co. Ltd. and the Music Department of the University of Alberta.

Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building

PROGRAM NOTES

JOSEPH C. LAI (Composer/Pianist) - Born in Hong Kong, Joseph began studying piano at age 3 years. His family immigrated to Canada in 1973 and he continued his studies in Edmonton. From 1978-1985 he studied privately with Professor Alexandra Munn of the University of Alberta. In 1981 he studied at the Johannessen International Summer School of Arts with distinguished pianists John Ogden, Ronal Turini, Béla Siki, and Robin McCabe. Joseph has consistently obtained first class honors in piano examinations and has already obtained his "Performer's" Diploma from the Western Board of Music. He has also received prizes and top honors from the Kiwanis Music Festival, Western Board of Music, and Alberta Cultural Assistance. His first public recital was in 1978, and in 1979 and 1981 he performed on the CTV series FEATURE ARTIST. Joseph played his Edmonton Debut Recital in February 1983 and his Orhcestral Debut in March 1984 with a performance of GRIEG's "Piano Concerto" with the Edmonton Youth Orchestra under the baton of Michael Massey. In 1985 during the Tercentenary celebrations of Bach's birth, Joseph's performance of Bach's Toccate in e, BWV 914 was broadcasted on the CKUA Radio program "CELEBRATE BACH". In that same year, he was a Bronze medalist in the Bach Tercentenary Festival Scholarship Competition. However, during the Bach competition, Joseph for the first time experienced the inability to control his fingers in his right hand, notably his third and forth fingers, which had a tendency to curl-up and tuck under the palm of the hand. For the past two years, a diagnosis of this unique problem is yet to be found, but many physicians feel this problem is the collapse of the finger muscles due to overplaying. Since the Bach competition, Joseph has concentrated on Left-Hand repertoire and fervently on Composition. In 1986, he began his compositional studies at the University of Alberta. This recital marks the premiere performances of three of his works.

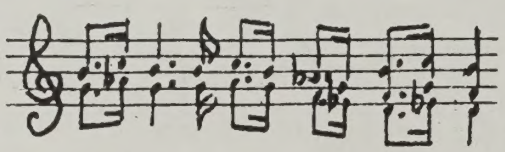
ORIENTIQUE for Piano and Percussion (March 1986): This work was written within the week of March 11-17. It was written under the special request of Ken Cunningham, who had wanted original music to be choreographed to a Classical Ballet solo as an entry in the Alberta Dance Festival. All soloists in the Festival had maximum time limits of two minutes, thus explaining the rather transient duration of this composition.

Having been brought up in Western Culture and nourished from the works of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms et al, this composer was rather ignorant of Oriental culture and Chinese music in general. Therefore, being neither a true Oriental nor a Caucasian, I took on the challenge and intriguing task of writing something that might sound substantially Oriental; but by combining musical insight and elements of both cultures, such as the use of western instruments.

ORIENTIQUE is based on four original themes, each lasting approximately 30 seconds. These melodies were emulated after Chinese Songs that I had listened to prior to composing. The score calls for a small scatter of percussion instruments: xylophone, temple wood blocks, gong, timpano, and piano; which places demands on both its lyrical and percussive qualities. What I had tried to achieve through this work was a composition that would be a spontaneous wash of impressionistic vibrant sound; and of course, to fulfill its original purpose as a dance piece. It is dedicated to Ken Cunningham.

SOLITUDE for Solo Clarinet (October 1986): "Nothing helps me so much as solitude. In my opinion it is only possible to compose when one is alone and there are no external disturbances to hinder the calm flow of ideas." - Sergei Rachmaninov

SOLITUDE was a compositional assignment which explored compositional techniques old and new. The entire work is based on the development and metamorphosis of "Projected Intervals" based on the following notes: B, C, C sharp, D sharp, E, F sharp, G, A, A sharp. All intervallic components are solely based on the interversion of these notes. The work is in one continuous movement, but may be seen as having three sections with the first being Improvisatory (ponderous, lyrical), and the second Solemn and is based on the DIES IRAE, and the concluding Toccate (percussive, sharp). Two thematic ideas dominates the entire work: one is the Dies Irae; the other a silly little tune borrowed from an old friend of the composer's:



-this awkward group of notes, no more than a fragment of a descending C minor harmonic scale, is utilized most intelligently and effectively in Lai's "Solitude". It is first used in the middle Dies Irae section where it is cleverly guised as embellishments to the long chain of trills; and then comes to the forefront in the concluding Toccate. The work `Solitude'; belies the agitated character and the varied moods of the work: Ponderous, lyrical, Playfully-teasingly, Violent-agitated, etc.

The technical demands on the clarinettist are enormous with the Toccate full of fiendishly difficult arpeggios abound with enormous leaps. This has once prompted someone to say: "He (Lai) must have copied a Lizst Etude for piano and rewrote it for clarinet!"

THREE ROMANCES (HOMAGE TO SERGEI RACHMANINOV) (May 1987): "In my own composition, I am greatly helped if I have in mind a book which I have recently read, or a beautiful picture or a poem. I try to make my music speak simply and directly that which is in my heart at the time I am composing. If there is love there, or bitterness, or sadness, or religion, these moods become part of my music..." - Sergei Rachmaninov

The Three Romances show a strong affinity to Rachmaninov's music and here pays homage to the great master. The first romanza: a Vocalise for soprano and piano, was deeply influenced by Rachmaninov's own hauntingly beautiful Vocalise. The demands on the vocalist are utterly difficult, if not awkward. The soprano must articulate unconventional leaps of augmented and diminished intervals, very much in the manner of SAMUEL BARBER's music. The most prominent interval here is the "Diabolus in musica" (tri-tone). The underlying piano accompaniment also poses problems for the soprano in that the rhythm constantly shifts and the voice and piano are never together note-for-note. Therefore, the voice is in triplet rhythm while the piano is in sixteenths. The piano only serves as a bed of harmonies for the vocal line. The piece was written as a Christmas present for Kathy D. Estridge, to whom it is dedicated.

The third romanza, also a Vocalise, was written shortly after the death of the composer's grandfather, and it is in memory of Rev. John Lai. After the dissonance of the opening chords, there is a brief declamatory melisma which make way for the wordless Aria of pure consonance. The form is almost A-B-A, however the recapitulation is preceded by another short melismatic passage for the soprano. The piano accompaniment is most unusual for it only employs the left hand. The composer wrote it especially for himself to perform and also adds to the dark nature of the work.

The second romanza, subtitled `Amortissement D'affection' (Dying Affection) for solo piano is very much in the style of Erik Satie. It is dedicated to Judy-Lynn Sawchuk.

MARCO BURAK (Composer) - Marco began formal piano studies at the age of seven and began formal study in Composition at the University of Alberta in 1986.

PIECE FOR UNACCOMPANIED FLUTE and PIANO PIECE FOR THE LEFT HAND: The flute piece, originally for the clarinet, was written in 1986 as a composition assignment.

The Piano Piece was written at the request of Joseph Lai, and was completed in May 1987. Neither of these pieces are programmatic and have extramusical significance.

JUDY-LYNN SAWCHUK (Soprano) - At 19, Judy Lynn is entering her third year at the University of Alberta. Miss Sawchuk has taped two radio braodcasts for the CBC, What The Old Man Does Is Always Right and Benjamin Britten's Noyee's Fludde with Canada's mezzo Audrey Glass. In addition, over ten speaking broadcasts for CKUA and ACCESS radio. This fall she may be seen on CFRN's Tommy Bank's Young Classical Performances. Miss Sawchuk has been awarded a silver medal from the Royal Conservatory for outstanding vocal performance. Aside from her credits in classical traning, Miss Sawchuk has built a repertoire in both stage and Musical Theatre experience. Credits include Maclab Theatre's recent production of Fire!, Show Without A Curtain, Banff School of Fine Arts, and To London With Love , Edmonton Musical Theatre. Miss Sawchuk will be seen in the upcoming feature film The Haunting of Hamilton High and The Boyfriend with Center Stage. This summer Judy-Lynn will be continuing her vocal studies at the Banff School of Fine Arts.

GRAEME PEPPINK (Percussionist) - Graeme is presently completing his Bachelor of Education degree minoring in secondary school music. He has played with the Edmonton Wind Sinfonia, Edmonton Youth Orchestra, University Concert Band and Wind Ensemble as well as several Concert Choir groups. Presently, Graeme is part of a jazz rhythm section trio, `3, 4 Jazz'. This trio is working on a Fringe Festival show, with possible performances at West Edmonton Mall and elsewhere.

SCOTT MARTIN (Percussionist) - Scott is entering his second year of Bachelor of Music at the University of Alberta. He has performed with the Edmonton Youth Orchestra, Alberta College Percussion Ensemble, and the University of Alberta Concert Band.

KEN CUNNINGHAM (Ballet Dancer) - A close friend of Joseph Lai's, Ken is a 20 year old Ballet dancer. Currently, he is studying at the Edmonton School of Ballet and for the past year has been dancing for the school's company, `The Edmonton Festival Ballet' under the Artistic Direction of R. Clinton Rothwell. In the 1986 Alberta Dance Festival, Ken was a silver medalist in the Solo Classical Ballet category with Lai's `ORIENTIQUE' original music and choreography by Mrs. Margaret Flynn. In July, he will be leaving to study in the Professional Division of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School. Thus being the case, this performance could very well be his farewell performance.

SONYA SCHRUM (Flautist) - Sonya has been playing flute for ten years and has completed her second year in the Bachelor of Music program at the University of Alberta. Ms. Schrum's future plans include teaching and hopefully a position in a symphony orchestra.

SYLVIA SHADICK-TAYLOR (Pianist) - Formerly of Saskatoon, has an extensive background in training and performance. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree cum laude from the University of Alberta, as well as Licentiate and Associate Diplomas. Her teachers in Canada include Sheila Shinkewski, Lyell Gustin and A.M. Munn, and her studies have also taken her to Banff, Aspen, New York and Salzburg, Austria. She has given several solo and chamber music recitals in Western Canada, and has been heard on CBC Radio both regionally and nationally. Edmonton is now her home where she has worked for the University of Alberta, the Edmonton Opera Association, Alberta Opera Touring Association and Grant MacEwan Community College, and is presently active as a freelance accompanist, adjudicator, examiner and private teacher.

DAVID HAYMAN (Clarinetist) - David has completed his third year in the Bachelor of Music program at the University of Alberta. He was a member of the University's St. Cecilia Orchestra, Symphonic Wind Ensemble, and the Edmonton Youth Orchestra.

RAVEL: CONCERTO IN D FOR THE LEFT HAND

Not only is Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand a stunning `tour de force' that makes formidable demands upon the soloist, but it also is a work of extraordinary fire, imagination and charm.

The story of how Ravel came to write this unique composition is unusual: It was commissioned by the distinguished and famed Austrian pianist, Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm in the First World War. Refusing to abandon his career, Wittgenstein approached successfully such eminent composers as Richard Strauss, Prokofiev, Benjamin Britten and among others, with the invitation to write music for him that would fit his particular requirements.

At the time that Ravel accepted the Wittgenstein commission he was already at work on another and two-handed piano concerto, the one in G major that he planned to use himself on a projected tour of America (which never materialized) that he hoped would match the success of a visit he had made to the U.S. in 1928. As Ravel worked at this concerto for his own use, he was haunted by memories of the jazz that had so fascinated him in the nightclubs of New York City's Harlem and Greenwich Village. These recollections inspired Jazz-like themes of his own, so Ravel decided to make use of them in the one-handed Wittgenstein concerto. This gave him the impetus to begin the commissioned work, while at the same time he continued the writing of the concerto he intended for himself.

The Concerto for the Left Hand consists of one continuous movement, and the opening `Lento' is an evocation on the grandest and most magnificent scale of the courtly sarabande. It is only when this has been built to a climax that the solo instrument enters--with a dramatic cadenza--like flourish which make unusually large use of the weight and striking power of the left hand and must be weighted towards the lower ranges of the keyboard. This leads to a quieter restatement of the theme already treated by the orchestra. A short but brilliant `strepitoso' passage brings the piano's statement to an end and the sarabande is once again taken over by the orchestra. This leads to a section in which the orchestra and solo instrument are heard alternately until the two join in a brief `andante' in which the piano supports the dotted melody sung by the english horn. There is a succeeding `allegro' which has the quality of a `tarantelle'. This gives way to a second and final `cadenza' of enormous brilliance and difficulty for piano; and the work comes to a rousing and concerted end.